

Is funding for Social Security and Medicare safe, which some in that party, particularly on the MAGA wing, think should be cut? We don't know. Show us the plan.

The silence is unacceptable because the American people have a right to know whether they are going to see crucial services suddenly dry up. And if Republicans don't get their way, Americans have a right to know whether or not the hard-right GOPers are really prepared to lead the House Republican conference to push the United States to default and whether the Republican House, led by MCCARTHY, will follow them over that devastating cliff, sending costs spiking on everything from credit cards to auto loans, to mortgages.

We have seen in realtime how dangerous it is for Speaker MCCARTHY to have empowered the most extreme elements of the GOP to set the agenda in the House. The MAGA wing of the GOP, which has set the rules on how the House should run, has left no doubt that, under their watch, no form of funding, however necessary, is safe.

Democrats, meanwhile, have been very clear about our position. When it comes to the debt ceiling, there can be no brinksmanship, no threats, no hostage-taking. This is simply too important. It has to get done.

Republicans need to show their plan to the American people. The clock is ticking on the debt ceiling every day. We must make sure that a first-ever default doesn't occur. Yet Republicans are making it more and more likely.

GATEWAY PROGRAM

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now, on Gateway, tomorrow is a big day for New Yorkers, as we welcome President Biden to celebrate progress on the most important infrastructure project in America, the new Gateway rail tunnel.

This day has been a decade in the making. The Northeast corridor is the busiest passenger rail line in the country, and the crossing under the Hudson is its most important nexus point. But for far too long, these two single-track tunnels have been badly in need of repairs.

After Hurricane Sandy devastated New York and the experts said there is limited time in which they will be operable, fixing the tunnel became one of my greatest passions, a labor of love, because I love New York and, without it, New York's economy would come screeching to a halt. For years, I worked hard, bringing together public and private partners from New York, New Jersey, and Amtrak to get everyone on the same page on Gateway. We met a lot of resistance along the way.

When President Trump was in office, he tried to freeze progress on the Gateway project altogether, going as far as holding it hostage in negotiations over the border wall. Still, I was proud that, even during the Trump administration,

I was able to double, triple, quadruple, and, in one case, increase tenfold the funding for various Federal spending accounts pertaining to Gateway because I knew that one day—one day—President Trump would no longer be in office.

Now, thanks to our bipartisan infrastructure bill and with great help from President Biden, Gateway is moving forward. Under our infrastructure law, tens of billions of more dollars have been dedicated to Federal accounts, which will support Gateway and many, many other large projects in the country, and this is something I am very, very proud to celebrate.

I will have more to say in New York tomorrow, but, today, I want to affirm once again that progress on Gateway is a very important example of how our infrastructure bill is making life better for millions of everyday Americans. Building two new tunnels and updating the existing tunnels will lead to work with good-paying union jobs—tens of thousands of jobs—and lead to a burst of economic activity for decades to come.

I want to thank President Biden for making the trip to New York tomorrow, and I am happy to say that, after a lot of hard work and a lot of stubborn persistence, our efforts are finally paying off.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

Mr. SCHUMER. On a final note, Madam President, last Thursday, I announced the slate of committee members for the 118th Congress on the Democratic side. I want to thank every one of my colleagues for their continued good work and readiness to make life better for the American people. I expect that, by the end of this week, we will have the full slate of all the committees fully locked in, enabling us to move forward on the important work we have before us.

We got a good deal—a tremendous amount—of bipartisan work done last year, and I am optimistic and hopeful that we can likewise continue this year in a productive, bipartisan spirit whenever possible. I look forward to having all committee memberships announced in full really soon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

AMERICAN ENERGY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the new Republican House of Representatives has already done more to protect our Nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve than the single-party Democratic government did in the last 2 years.

First, House Republicans passed legislation that would ban the Federal Government from selling energy from the SPR to benefit our Nation's No. 1 strategic adversary—the Chinese Communist Party. Then, last week, the House followed on by passing H.R. 21, a bipartisan bill that would require the Department of Energy to offset any nonemergency drawdowns of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve by expanding access to America's abundant domestic energy on Federal lands. Speaker MCCARTHY and Chair CATHY MC MORRIS RODGERS were right to make American energy security a top priority for their new majority.

It is too bad that it is even necessary to protect our Nation's emergency energy reserves from our own Commander in Chief and his party, but unfortunately the Biden administration has proven that it is necessary.

Last year, with his party hurting at the polls, President Biden released more than 200 million barrels, leaving America's strategic reserve at its lowest level since 1983. To make matters worse, this political gamble didn't just leave America less secure, it directly benefited China. President Biden's Department of Energy hadn't just sold off critical supplies; they sold some of them—listen to this—directly to a Chinese refining company.

Last year, Senate Republicans put every Democrat on the record with an amendment to clamp down on selling our strategic reserve to China. Senate Democrats blocked it. The Democratic Senators from States like West Virginia, Montana, and Ohio voted on party lines to let the Biden administration continue to sell our reserves to the CCP.

Democrats' recklessness with our energy reserves actually predates this particular administration. Remember back when oil prices were at historic lows during the early days of the COVID pandemic? We Republicans tried to refill the SPR to the top. We could have totally replenished our stockpile at bargain-basement prices. But the Senate Democrat leader blocked it and bragged about blocking it. Our colleague crowed that his party had stopped a "bailout for Big Oil." Of course, what he really blocked was a win-win for national security as well as the American taxpayer.

Washington Democrats have been dead wrong on how to handle our strategic reserve literally for years. This is just one symptom of their deep misunderstanding about energy, about the importance of American energy dominance and the way to achieve it.

Across the Atlantic, war in Ukraine has brought the vulnerability of Europe's dependence on Russian energy

into stark and painful relief. Half-baked green transitions, an allergy to clean and reliable nuclear power, and an addiction to Russian gas sent our allies' energy costs through the roof, with working families and ratepayers actually footing the bills.

It could have been a helpful, cautionary tale for the United States, but by last year, the Biden administration was already a year deep into their comprehensive war on abundant and affordable American energy. Remember, on day one in office, President Biden canceled further work on the Keystone XL Pipeline with the stroke of a pen—forget safe and efficient energy transport, high-paying American jobs, and lower cost, reliable power. The President had already put climate activism in the driver's seat of his own energy policy.

The Biden administration has frozen new oil exploration on public lands, overhauled permitting rules to make it harder to develop natural gas resources, dragged the United States back into a climate deal that gives the Chinese Communist Party a pass to keep increasing its carbon emissions, and balked at a chance to block Vladimir Putin's latest pipeline for controlling European consumption.

It is an absolutely nonsensical agenda, and it hasn't taken long for families across our country to feel the direct effects in the form of soaring prices in their heating and electricity bills, at the gas pump, as well as at the grocery store.

Fortunately, millions of working Americans were fed up last November and decided to put an end to Democrats' total control here in Washington. Republicans will stand strong on the side of American energy dominance, on the side of national security, on the side of American workers, American families, and America's future.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

POLICE REFORMS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, as chairman of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, I am responsible for legislation in the Senate relative to law enforcement and criminal justice. It is an awesome responsibility, and I think about it quite a bit because the first thing all of us want is the safety of our families and our communities. It is the first question asked: How safe is that area of Chicago? How safe is that part of Springfield? It is a reality, and it is a natural reaction.

I have had, during the course of my congressional career, the opportunity to meet many of the men and women in

law enforcement. Let me tell you, there are some outstanding people who literally get up in the morning and put on that badge and risk their lives. They go out for just a routine traffic stop, and they could end up dead. That is the reality of police work in a dangerous world, particularly in a world awash with guns, as we are in the United States.

Having said that, acknowledging that reality, I also know that there are cops who are doing terrible things. That was brought home to America vividly over the last several days. You see, videotapes and DNA evidence have changed our conversation about law enforcement and justice. We now know just what happened—not an account of what happened; we know what happened. We see it on videotapes over and over and over again. And we know sometimes that people who have been found guilty of crimes and are serving long sentences—it turns out the DNA evidence proves it couldn't possibly have been them who were responsible. It is a gross miscarriage of justice for the person who is incarcerated—and even worse, the fact that the person who is culpable, blamable, who should be prosecuted, may somewhere be on the loose. Videotape and DNA have changed it.

Many Americans are struggling with feelings of grief and disbelief after they watched the videotapes of Tyre Nichols being beaten to death by a group of Memphis police officers.

Mr. Nichols, a 29-year-old father of a young son, worked the second shift at a FedEx facility with his stepfather. He loved skateboarding and photography. He loved his mother so much, he had her name tattooed on his arm. He had no criminal record. One friend told a reporter Mr. Nichols was even thinking about being a police officer to try to make the system better from the inside.

The videotapes of the deadly assault on Mr. Nichols by Memphis police officers on January 7 are horrific and sickening. They show at least five officers attacking Mr. Nichols with their fists, boots, batons, Tasers, and pepper spray, while yelling contradictory orders to him. They continued pummeling Mr. Nichols even as he screamed in pain, begged them to stop, and called out for his mother. One officer kicked him in the head so hard that the officer was limping afterwards.

When the beating was over, another officer propped an apparently unconscious Tyre Nichols up against the side of the squad car while the others laughed, fist-bumped, and tried to justify their awful behavior.

It took 20 minutes for an ambulance to arrive, even longer for medical aid to be rendered. Tyre Nichols died 3 days later in a Memphis hospital. An independent autopsy revealed he had "suffered extensive bleeding caused by a severe beating."

The killing of Tyre Nichols follows years of devastating tragedies and

needless loss. Who can ever forget George Floyd? When I saw the videotape of what happened to him and saw that policeman with his knee on his neck stare straight at the camera—I will never forget that. Or Breonna Taylor, shot in her apartment.

In my own home State of Illinois, Laquan McDonald. A videotape that was held back from the public for over a year finally was brought to light, and people saw that he was shot in the back repeatedly, over and over again. There are so many others. For George Floyd, he was murdered as he lay on a curb in Minneapolis. Tyre Nichols was chased down and beaten to death.

Black Americans in particular are forced to live through trauma with every new incident of police violence.

I applaud the Shelby County district attorney for moving swiftly in seeking the indictment of the five police officers. A sixth officer connected to the incident was suspended today.

I agree with the attorney for Mr. Nichols' family, Ben Crump, that the response by prosecutors could be a "blueprint" for how such cases should be handled in the future if, inevitably, there are such cases.

We shouldn't wait for months to bring charges. There is no excuse for delayed justice when the heinous acts occur and the facts are as clear as the videotape.

I also want to extend my deepest condolences to Mr. Nichols' family, especially his mom and his stepfather, who have responded with dignity and grace to this unimaginable ordeal.

Before the videotapes were released, they called repeatedly for protests to be peaceful. I would like to think that I would have the strength to do that, having just lost my son in those circumstances, but the Nichols family did, and throughout our Nation, almost without exception, their wishes have been respected.

But prosecutions and peaceful protests cannot be the only response to this tragedy. Americans—especially Black Americans—are exhausted by the injustice of officers who abuse their authority. They are tired of the systemic failures that can lead to a young man being beaten to death after a questionable traffic stop.

As chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am committed to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to finally confront these problems with meaningful legislation.

We need to have an honest conversation with law enforcement officers about screening, training, inherent bias, use of force, and consequences for unjust actions.

We need to prohibit deadly and dishonorable police misconduct. We must recruit and train the next generation of law enforcement to protect and serve everyone in America: Black, White, Brown, and everything in between.

We have made some very modest progress. Last December, Congress enacted and the President signed a bill on